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Photo: Andrew Potter

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THE '00S - 2000

February - Pink Panthers Organize in Detroit

It was time for a new anti-racist, anti-homophobic, pro-trans presence in the city and the Pink Panthers were created. The radical, queer group used a series of flyers and posters around Detroit to get their name out. Their mission was to educate people on issues and find ways to take care of their community outside of government. This was part of a growing number of young, LGBT activists who were no longer willing to wait on adult authorities for protection.



April - Royal Oak Ban on Serving Gays Repealed

The city commissioners in Royal Oak unanimously repealed a 41-year-old ordinance that banned the serving to "homosexuals, prostitutes and drug users" at liquor establishments on April 6. The long-forgotten ordinance had reportedly not been enforced in years, if at all. The original language of the ordinance had been lifted directly from a state statute that was revised. The antiquated ordinance came to light in a meeting with management of the Royal Oak Music Theater.



June - Benefits for Gays

Kalamazoo became the second city in the state of Michigan (Ann Arbor was the first) to allow same-sex partners of city employees to participate in all benefits extended to their married heterosexual peers. Kalamazoo City Manager Pat DiGiovanni said at the time the new policy makes "good sense from the point of attracting and retaining good employees."



FLASHING BACK TO THE PAST:



October - Matriarch to LGBT Community Dies

Ruth Ellis was 101 when she died on Oct. 5. Born July 23, 1899, in Springfield, Illinois, Ellis was respected and loved for her longevity and endurance as one of Detroit's oldest and proudest African-American lesbians, the first woman in the City of Detroit to own her own printing company, and for her many years of service to all people in need. Beginning in the 1930s, Ellis provided shelter, physical support and spiritual affirmation to those whose race, sexual orientation or both set them apart from the dominant culture. Ruth Ellis Center is named in honor of her life and work.



August - Car Show Offers Gay Camaraderie

Gay car enthusiasts came together for the four-day Lambda Car Club Grand International, which attracted more than 350 people from across the nation and Europe to the Troy Holiday Inn. Close to 160 cars filled the parking lot during the event sponsored by LGBT employee resource groups from Ford (GLOBE), General Motors (GM PLUS) and DaimlerChrysler (POD).

DR. LAURA'S ROCKY YEAR

Dr. Laura Schlessinger, a conservative radio and television talk show host, had provoked the ire of gay groups for calling homosexuality "deviant" and derivative of "biological error."

January - As the protests and demonstrations against Paramount continued, and meetings between the studio and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation yielded no results, the stage is set for a massive revolt against Dr. Laura Schlessinger.

March - Designed to build "a coalition against hate," StopDrLaura.com was launched, attracting 373,345 hits in its first 24 hours. The Horizons Foundation in San Francisco ran full-page ads against the radio talk show host, calling her message "harmful to our children." The ads ran in the national editions of the New York Times, San Francisco Chronicle, San



Francisco Examiner and the Los Angeles Times.

April - Dr. Laura canceled appearances and book signings across the country in the wake of massive protests, claiming she didn't want to "compromise anyone's physical safety."

May - Dr. Laura strikes back, going on Larry King Live and Fox News Sunday to defend her beliefs and statements. Contradicting herself, she tells King she's

"not the expert" on sexual orientation, while on Fox News she stands by her infamous "biological error" quote claiming her Ph.D. in biology backs it up. By the end of the month Dr. Laura had reduced her interview schedule and allegedly devised a method of ending them early if necessary.

June- Paramount withdrew Dr. Laura and her upcoming TV show from a scheduled panel with TV critics at the annual press tour scheduled for July in Pasadena, Calif.

July - Dr. Laura posted a "Call to Action" on her website, urging fans to help save her advertisers.

August - Tappings for the first Dr. Laura show begins and, according to sources, Dr. Laura continues her crusade against gays and lesbians reiterating her belief that they are a "biological error."

September - As Dr. Laura debuted on TV, demonstrations took place in over 30 cities airing the weekday program. "The protests are going to last until

the TV show comes off the air and Paramount drops its double standard on prejudice," said John Aravosis, co-founder of StopDrLaura.com.

October - Two Canadian TV stations became the first to dump Dr. Laura. In a letter that was to run on the back cover of today's edition of Variety, the Hollywood trade paper, Dr. Laura said, "In talking about gays and lesbians, some of my words were poorly chosen. I deeply regret the hurt this situation has caused the gay and lesbian community." Dr. Laura, who is an Orthodox Jew, said in the letter that she was seeking forgiveness in keeping with the tradition of Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement.

November - Across the country, Dr. Laura found her TV show dropped to late-night time slots from 2-6 a.m. in seven of the country's top 10 TV markets.

December - With stations across the country continuing to downgrade and drop the show, a Variety article estimated that Paramount had lost \$1 million on Dr. Laura.

Q&A: Meet Creating Change Co-Chair Bridie Johnson

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Creating Change is an annual LGBTQ conference put on by the National LGBTQ Task Force. Hosting hundreds of workshops, caucus sessions, keynote speakers and more, the more than 30-year-old event tours across the U.S., every year choosing a city in which to showcase the LGBTQ community's local and national community. This year, Creating Change 2019 is coming to Detroit in January. In advance of the event, BTL has reached out to interview four local co-chairs who are involved in putting on this Detroit-specific event. This interview is part of that series.

Bridie Johnson is a state-licensed social worker and is currently employed as the clinical supervisor of the Behavioral Health Department of American Indian Health and Family Services. Prior to that, Johnson was the director of programs for the Ruth Ellis Center. Johnson has also conducted national trainings on transgender inclusion in the Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Shelter safe space movement in Michigan. In addition, Johnson conducted research for the I Am for Survivors Project, an initiative focused on increasing accessibility in Michigan for LGBT survivors of domestic and sexual violence needing safe shelter spaces.

What does Creating Change mean to you?

Creating Change is a national change agent that assures those of the majority are awakened and opened up to learn and grow with people in desperate need for acceptance and inclusion. For some, Creating Change is a place to mingle, network and relax; for others, Creating Change is a life-saving mechanism that holds the individual together due to lack of community support in their lives.

What are you doing to create change in your own life?

I live by Creating Change's philosophy. I model appropriate inclusive behavior and am an ally to many in the LBGT community and my personal networks represent those I support always.

What made you feel you had to be a co-chair?

The fact that I was nominated by friends and colleagues in the Metro Detroit area immediately created a sense of honor and devotion to assure the event goes smoothly for its 31st year here in Detroit. This along with my internal desire to consistently creating change in my life and in Detroit are both extremely important to me.

What are you most looking forward to about Creating Change 2019?



"I live by Creating Change's philosophy. I model appropriate inclusive behavior and am an ally to many in the LBGT community and my personal networks represent those I support always"

Presenting an educational workshop for the community at large. Along with seeing and networking with 4,000-plus individuals and spending a week here in the heart of the city of Detroit together with over 350 breakout sessions to learn from making it the largest LGBT training in the nation.

What is your take on Gay Rights in the Era of No. 45? Where are we as a community and where do we need to be?

My take on No. 45 is better left unspoken, and as a community we all as allies need to be in Detroit, in January, for Creating Change 2019. In Detroit our community should remember that we are here to resist, relearn and then return to our community stronger than we were before.

More information about the conference and its offerings can be found online at creatingchange.org. Watch for our interviews with all the Creating Change 2019 co-chairs in upcoming issues of BTL.

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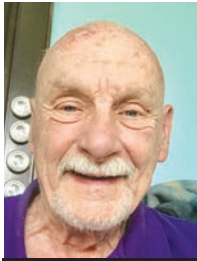
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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

'Ys' Beyond my Years!

Long, long before The Village People made “YMCA” — the song that would become the unofficial, persistent national anthem of Winter Olympian Brian Boitano — “Ys” played an important role. They were second only to gay bars, as places to meet available others of like-minded, body-mind-and-spirit, triune — me, you and the shower — persuasions.

In the '60s and '70s there were four YMCAs in the Metro Detroit area. (The long-gone Grand Circus Park YMCA dating to 1904.) There's only one YMCA now, located on Broadway, in a totally revitalized, energetic, amazingly-changed, thriving new Downtown area.

It was understood in the late '50s that the “C” in YMCA also stood for contact (among other gerunds of neo-pagan opportunity). And in the course of my wanderlust years, I've spent many pleasant (and, I'll add, radiantly scrubbed) weekends at “Ys” in Cleveland, Chicago, Toronto, Montreal and, the subject of this reminiscence, New York City.

I recall only two mishaps. At Chicago's exuberant Lawton “Y” in the 1970s, I decided to take a nap after a gin martini brunch at the nearby, crazy patchwork Haig Bar (leaving my door ajar with every good intention of do-unto-others, seventh-floor hospitality).

When I awoke, I was chagrined to find that someone, in an act of non-Christian self-serving, had taken my new shoes and left me with their floppy, five-sizes too small clogs. (I have no recollection of what I bartered for the exchange. If anything equally small or virginal.)

In the Detroit YMCA, when I was a young “looker” (and by that I mean I was always looking), I happened to be on the wrong floor at the wrong time. A passkey check was demanded. “This is for two floors below,” said the burly security guy. “Why are you here?”

“It's Sunday,” said I with a reasonably straight face. “I'm just checking to see if my friends are planning to go to church.”

As I couldn't remember their room number, their names or, what's worse, their religious convictions (and I was wearing nothing but a baptismal tea towel), I was told to leave the “Y” immediately!

My name was placed on a list (rather sizable I learned from an attendant friend) of “transient undesirables.” But I remember New York City's Sloan House YMCA, on West 34th Street, with much nostalgic, albeit transient fondness.

(Thanks “Jerry” — whatever nursing home you're now in — for three memorable, if non-air-conditioned, 80-degree, romantic summer days.)

Arriving by train — 13 hours, 15 minutes, 35 seconds is a long time to spend on a confining, tepidly ventilated train playing gin rummy — and when friend Gary and I arrived at Grand Central Station we were both in need of a soothing shower (but not together).

We took a hectic cab ride to the Sloan House, where gorgeously blond friend Richard, who flew in the day before, had made our reservations.

See **Parting Glances**, continued on next page



BY MICHELLE E. BROWN

The Morning After: No Pill, Just Hard Work

One of the lasting lessons I learned from Detroit's legendary activist Jeff Montgomery was no matter what the outcome was of an election, we must prepare for the morning after. As I write this before knowing the results, I know that things could go either for or against us, but we have to be prepared. When he said this advice, Montgomery was talking about the 2004 Michigan vote that made it unconstitutional for the state to recognize or perform same-sex marriages or civil unions. So much was at stake.

The 2018 midterm elections are much the same. So much is at stake, not just for the LGBTQIA community, but for immigrants, education, fair wages, survivors of sexual assault, reproductive rights, voting rights and so much more.

And, no matter what the outcome of the midterm election, we still have a lot of work to do. There are no quick fixes. There's no morning-after pill to fix all that's wrong in our communities, our state, our country and in our world.

And as much as I want to believe that rainbow and blue waves can turn the tide on the bright orange tsunami that's hell-bent on destroying all we hold dear, the reality is things didn't just get bad since 45 took office; they just got real. Really real.

Viewpoint

Racism, homophobia and transphobia have only been emboldened under 45 but were nothing new for communities of color or members of the LGBTQIA community. We knew we weren't entering a post-racial period in America with the election of Barack Obama. There was still Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Tanisha Anderson, Walter Scott, Sandra Bland, Mike Brown, Eric Garner and others.

Black Lives Matter but everyday reports of shootings and social and economic disparities said they didn't. At the same time, rhetoric against other communities of color and immigrants was ratcheted up in daily tweets

And even with the end of “don't ask, don't tell,” marriage equality and markedly increased support for LGBTQIA rights across the country and in the White House, the gay community knew there would still be haters.

Despite Trump's promise to defend LGBTQ rights, his health agency has blocked efforts to combat discrimination. Political appointees have halted or rolled back regulations intended to protect LGBTQ workers and patients, removed LGBTQ-friendly language from documents and reassigned the

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► Viewpoint

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senior adviser dedicated to LGBTQ health.

In 2017, at least 29 deaths of transgender people in the U.S. due to fatal violence were reported. Right now, 2018 is on track to be even worse for deadly assaults against transgender Americans.

We've endured the travel bans, revelations of sexual misconduct and assault that gave life to the #MeToo movement and were reminded again during the Kavanaugh confirmations.

We were appalled by the shootings at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and inspired by the protests led by the Parkland students.

All of this brought us to the 2018 midterms. Many again had a fire lit in their belly – a burning for justice, equality, freedom and hope. We've marched, rallied, registered voters and rallied some more.

Our mailboxes – electronic and real-world, have been jammed with flyers, pamphlets and fundraising letters. And we've responded showing up and shelling out record numbers to turn the tide with our rainbow and blue waves.

But now what? We still have a lot of work to do.

Unfortunately, when asked why they didn't vote, there are those who will tell you their vote doesn't count, that their one vote won't make a difference. Some have never voted, and others have stopped voting and still use these same excuses.

Democracy is not a sport. There are no slam dunks, Hail Mary passes or home runs. It also is not a spectator sport where we can sit on the sidelines, cheer, hope and pray that our team will win.

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 6

Our stay during that hot, humid memorable July was for a week, at the cost of \$50. (In the '40s, sci-fi author Ray Bradbury, of "Fahrenheit 541" fame, lived at Sloan House for \$5 a week.)

Richard greeted us in the crowded lobby, eagerly telling us as we registered that he had met this "hot number" who was going to introduce him to his buddy Marlon Brando. Party time!

I hadn't been in my room more than 10 perspiring minutes when there was a knock at my door.

"Hey, Alexander! You're wanted on the hall phone."

The call was from someone named Jerry. "I saw you check in," he said, quite directly. "If you're available I'd like to, er, buy you coffee."

Democracy is a living, participative work in progress that takes all of our effort not only at the polls but every day.

There will be wounds to heal and fences to mend, but let's commit to do the work.

Let's get beyond partisan politics and fight for a system that puts people first. Let's re-commit to the promise of America that has historically brought immigrants to this country, celebrate their contributions and not let our borders be ruled by fear and hate-mongering.

Let's provide our children a safe space to learn, where they'll learn to think critically, feel safe and recognize they can differ with someone without vilifying them. But most importantly, let them know that they should be respected and free to be their authentic selves, especially if they are LGBTQIA.

Let's not forget the environment, income inequality, jobs with fair wages, health care and so much more just in this country. But we're also part of the global community. There's only one earth and our actions/inactions have global implications.

There's no morning-after pill to fix all that's wrong in our communities, our state, our country and in our world, but maybe now that we've seen just how ugly things can get, we're ready to get it done!

Michelle E. Brown is a public speaker, activist and author. Her blog radio podcast "Collections By Michelle Brown-Blog Radio" airs every Thursday at 7 p.m. Current and archived episodes can be heard on Blog Talk Radio, iTunes, Stitcher or SoundCloud. Follow her on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Jerry — who proved to be a mature guy of 25 in contrast to my tenuous 19 — was pleasant, good-looking, all-around nice. He was from Sandusky, Ohio, staying for a three-day holiday weekend.

"If you like, I can show you around. We can hit a few of the tourist spots. Take in the bars," he said. "It's up to you. How about it? Please?"

As Brando wasn't a viable option, I said sure. It was memorable (I think.) My "Y" stay was followed by a weekend at Fire Island that included a glimpse or two of Truman Capote, and meeting a lesbian couple who named their cottage — are you ready? — The Lickety-Split.

Charles Alexander is prolific both as a BTL columnist (700-plus columns) and as a well-known LGBT community artist (1000 Facebook images). He is a Spirit of Detroit Award recipient and an Affirmations LGBT CENTER Jan Stevenson awardee. Connect with him at Charles@pridesource.com.

Creep Of The Week

Keep MA Safe

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

By the time you read this the 2018 Midterm Election will be over. We'll find out whether we're surfing the "blue wave" or if we've been slammed against the "red wall."

There is a lot on the ballot across the country, not least of which is democracy itself. Will Americans elect people who will hold Donald Trump accountable? Or are Americans the worst?

In Massachusetts, transgender people are on the ballot. More specifically, on the ballot is whether or not transgender people deserve the protections granted to them under law in the state.

According to the Washington Post, "At stake is a 2-year-old Massachusetts law protecting transgender people from discrimination in public places, including restaurants, stores, hospitals, libraries and gyms."

Now, I don't need to tell you that minority rights should never be on the ballot. It was wrong to let the majority vote on marriage rights for same-sex couples, for example. It is incredibly damaging to have the voting majority debating whether or not your family is legitimate or if the love you feel for your partner is "real" or if you're just a weirdo pervert.

Which is exactly what is happening in Massachusetts right now as people will vote on whether or not transgender people are allowed to participate in public life.

Because that's what this is. If you are cisgender, then you probably have never had to think twice about what to do when you're, say, at the grocery store and have to pee. You go into whichever restroom corresponds with your gender identity, and then what happens behind stall doors is your business.

But if you're trans or gender queer or just gender non-conforming, it's not that easy. There are lots of misconceptions about what it means to be transgender. Hence all of the "bathroom bills" that have popped up across the country under the guise of keeping women and girls safe from "men in dresses."

Let me just point out how disingenuous it is that those who claim to want to protect women from harm are the same people who are so quick to paint women who come forward with their experiences of being sexually assaulted as liars who are hurting poor, innocent men.

I don't buy for a second that people who push anti-trans bills care about anything other than hurting trans people.

The group behind trying to repeal the protections calls itself Keep MA Safe, and its logo is particularly revealing. It depicts the common stick figure with a skirt women's room symbol on one side of a divide, and a

Now, I don't need to tell you that minority rights should never be on the ballot. It was wrong to let the majority vote on marriage rights for same-sex couples, for example. It is incredibly damaging to have the voting majority debating whether or not your family is legitimate or if the love you feel for your partner is "real" or if you're just a weirdo pervert.

stick figure without a skirt on the other side standing on a toilet peeing over the divide.

Their TV spot is even worse, depicting a man lurking in a bathroom stall and peering out at a young woman getting dressed while a voiceover warns that "convicted sex offenders" would basically be commandeering all toilets from here on out.

Anyway, the message is clear: the "Bathroom and Locker Room Law" as KMAS calls it, will allow creeps to prey on women in these public spaces and there's nothing anyone can do about it. As if laws against sexual assault and harassment weren't already on the books.

Most egregious is an image on their website of a frightened girl looking out from a stall door. A beefy hand is planted next to her head, clearly indicating she's cornered and about to be assaulted. This is, plainly, sick. Because sexual assault against children is something that actually happens and the people who are demonizing trans folks are actually putting children in more danger by diverting resources and attention from actual threats.

It's never been easy to be trans, but today's climate is particularly awful. For one thing, under President Obama protections for trans people were written into law. Many trans people came out once they had the law on their side. But now the president himself demonizes trans folks and those who find the whole "transgender thing" confusing or icky or wrong are steadily chipping away at those protections. And yet trans folks who are out can't exactly go back into hiding. They are left exposed and targeted from the very top of the government on down.

Thankfully voting yes on the ballot question, which would leave the trans rights laws in place, has wide support in Massachusetts and it's likely to win. And I hope that by the time you're reading this it has. And that we have many other wins to celebrate before taking a quick break so that we're refreshed and energized for 2020. Because fascism isn't going to fight itself.

WSU: You Can't Erase Permanent Transgender Support Rally Draws Dozens

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

A crowd of nearly 100 came out Saturday to Wayne State University's Gullen Mall for a rally called You Can't Erase Permanent. Organized by a variety of groups, including TG Detroit, Ferndale Pride, the Metro-Detroit Political Action Network, Stand with Trans, Transcend the Binary, the Gender-Identity Network Alliance, FtM Detroit, Transgender Michigan and Affirmations, the rally was emceed by Samantha Rogers from TG Detroit and Ferndale Pride Event Chair Julia Music.

The rally was held in response to a leaked memo from within the Trump administration that demonstrated its attempt to change the legal definition of gender.

"They plan to define transgender people right out of existence," Rogers said. "Here's what they said: 'Sex means a person's status as male or female based on immutable biological traits identified by or before birth.' They said, 'Key government agencies need to adopt an explicit and uniformed definition of gender as determined on a biological basis that is clear and grounded in science.' I don't know what science they've been looking at, but the science I've been seeing kicks their science's ass."

Rogers, like most of those who spoke at the rally, spoke passionately about voting in Tuesday's midterm elections.

"We exist and we always have existed, but so has hatred, so has blind prejudice," Rogers said. "Leaders without morals pray on weak minds and ferment groundless fear."

Speaking directly to the president, Rogers was clear.

"We are Americans, Mr. Trump. We've been here forever and we're not going away. We deserve better than you, Mr. Trump, because we actually love this country that you and your greed seek to destroy," Rogers said. "We deserve better. But we are not leaving. You can count on it. You cannot legislate us away. We exist. We exist whether you like it or not and this is our country, too."

Tammi Moyer, the western Wayne County chapter leader for Transgender Michigan, shared a similar message.

"We are humans and we deserve every right and protection that every citizen of this great country has," Moyer said. "If our government can't see this, then come this Tuesday, please go to the polls and tell them just that. Exercise your voice. Vote and tell them if they can't see that we are people that



Ferndale Pride Event Chair Julia Music. BTL photo: Jason Michael.

deserve every right and legal protection that everybody else has then they are not qualified to represent us."

Roz Keith, executive director of Stand with

Trans, also made an impassioned plea.

"We need to make change," Keith said. "We need to vote for people who believe in your transgender rights, the rights of our families and children and neighbors. We need to rally together as a community. Together we are stronger and mightier. We are all so much more than our gender."

Other speakers at the rally included Jack Elliot Earls from Transcend the Binary, JoJoss Fournier of the Metro-Detroit Political Action Network, Green Party gubernatorial candidate Jennifer Kurland, Robert Jay from MDPAN, transgender icon and founder of the now defunct Crossroads Grace Bacon, Ashton Niedzwiecki from Detroit FtM, Emme Zanotti from Stand with Trans and more.

Several community activists were unable to attend the rally but sent statements. Organizers read remarks from Rachel Crandall-Crocker, executive director of Transgender Michigan; Green Party candidate for lieutenant governor Char Davenport; former gubernatorial candidate Abdul El Sayed; Michelle Fox-Phillips, executive director of the Gender-Identity Network Alliance; ACLU of Michigan LGBT Project Staff Attorney Jay Kaplan; Brayden Misiolek from Transcend the Binary; Dana Nessel, Democratic candidate for attorney general; Lilianna Reyes, interim executive director of Affirmations and Stephanie White, executive director of Equality Michigan.



BY ROZ KEITH

Reflections on the Trump Administration's Attitude Toward Transgender People and Anti-Semitism

A friend reached out to me yesterday to see if I was OK. She said, "Everyone I care about is under attack." My dear friend was referring to the administration's desire to "erase" trans identities and the slaughter of 11 Jews one week ago today in Pittsburgh. My sorrow, remorse and anger was twofold. I'm a Jewish mother of a transgender child and many transgender friends.

Earlier this week, a 14-year-old trans boy sent me a text. He and I have been in contact now for about a month. He is desperate for his mom's support, and I've been trying to help him bridge the gap with her. The text was to update me as I've sent him a few resources to share with his mom in the hope that she would come around and accept his authentic identity.

She told him that she has no interest in reading anything or talking to anyone who

takes his side. She told him that nothing will change for her. She doesn't "believe" in it. The "it" being transgender identities.

As a parent, my goal has always been to support my children; to love them unconditionally; to parent with guidance, boundaries and love; and to show them that there are all sorts of people in the world.

It is my job to reinforce that they may not be friends with everyone and not everyone will like them or want to be their friend, but that they need to be kind.

When my son came out to me as transgender nearly six years ago, I had no idea what to do. I didn't have any transgender friends or a community I could turn to. However, I did know that I loved my child with every fiber of my being. I knew that I would do whatever it took to get the support he needed; to find the

resources necessary so he could have a future.

I can't pretend it was easy. There were a lot of bumps and bruises along the way, deep potholes that tripped us up numerous times, but we kept going. This is parenting. No one ever said it would be easy.

Also, I cannot have attended Wayne State University's transgender protest of Trump-initiated hatred without mentioning that 11 of my Jewish community members were also gunned down recently for no reason in the sanctuary where they came for peace. They were there to pray to God, to thank God for another week: fathers, brothers, sons, grandmothers, friends, husbands and wives were gunned down for no reason other than the fact that they were Jewish.

I am a cisgender, heterosexual white Jewish woman who raised a family to be kind and fair

and to value others. I will never know what it's like to walk in the shoes of a transgender person, to be dismissed because of who I am.

However, I do know what it's like to be hated just because I pray to a different God. We need to make change. We need to vote for people who believe in your transgender rights, the rights of our families and children and neighbors.

We need to rally together as a community. Together we are stronger and mightier. We are all so much more than our gender. Let's show the world how amazing we truly are. Shalom. Peace.

Roz Keith is the founder and board president of Stand With Trans. To find out more about that organization, visit standwithtrans.org.

Viewpoint

Michigan Outscores National Average in HRC Municipal Equality Index

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Last month the Human Rights Campaign recognized Michigan as high above the national average in its annual Municipal Equality Index. The state earned 73 out of 100 possible points — 15 points higher than the national average of 58. HRC is a national LGBTQ activism organization and releases its Index in an effort to provide a comprehensive breakdown of the LGBTQ-inclusiveness of laws, policies, benefits and services across 506 U.S. cities. These cities are chosen in an effort to fairly represent some of the largest communities of LGBTQ people across the nation.

Xavier Persad is HRC's Senior Legislative Counsel and the author of this year's MEI Report. He broke down why Michigan's cities were selected for rating.

"Fifty state capitals, the 200 largest cities in the country, the five largest cities in each state, 75 cities with high proportions of same-sex couples according to a Williams Institute analysis of the 2010 U.S. Census, the cities that are home to each state's two largest public universities and 98 cities selected by members and supporters of our state LGBTQ equality group partners," Persad said. "So, significant overlap between those criteria results in the cities that we rate for a total of 11 in Michigan."

The MEI counts points for each chosen city via a five-part scorecard that covers these categories: Non-Discrimination Laws, Municipality as Employer, Municipal Services, Law Enforcement and Leadership on LGBTQ Equality. Due to the varying size and population of each selected city, what constitutes a perfect 100-point score for one municipality might be significantly different for another. Persad said that this is wholly intentional.

"Our scorecard is structured in a way to allow any city of any size with varying levels of legal authority to score well, even 100 points despite those varying levels of resources and legal authority," he said. "We have 100 points on the scorecard as well as 22 bonus points that reflect things that many cities can do that perhaps all cities cannot do. Or ways that cities are going above and beyond in pushing equality more and what that looks like. So, yes, cities of any size, political background and resources can achieve 100 points."

So, although Michigan does not have existing statewide civil rights laws that cover gender identity or sexual orientation, it hasn't deterred four of its cities — Ann Arbor, Detroit, East Lansing and first-timer Ferndale — from becoming what the MEI ranks as all-stars.

"What we mean by that is that these

cities scored extremely well above an 85 despite being located in a state like Michigan where there's no state-level nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ people," Persad said. "Generally, cities that we rated in Michigan averaged above the national average because of local leadership and in passing comprehensive non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people that reach housing, employment and public accommodations."

And according to the aggregated scores in the 2018 MEI, this year in general has been a good one for the Great Lakes region. Overall, the area's regional average score was reported to have increased by one point, as well as other positive shifts.

"... Like last year, the highest proportion of 100s to cities rated is the Great Lakes region, with nearly two in three cities securing the MEI's highest score," said the report. "What's more, small and medium-sized cities accounted for about 60 percent of perfect scores."

Ferndale was noted especially in the report this year, too, because it's a "first-time 100-point city and the municipality

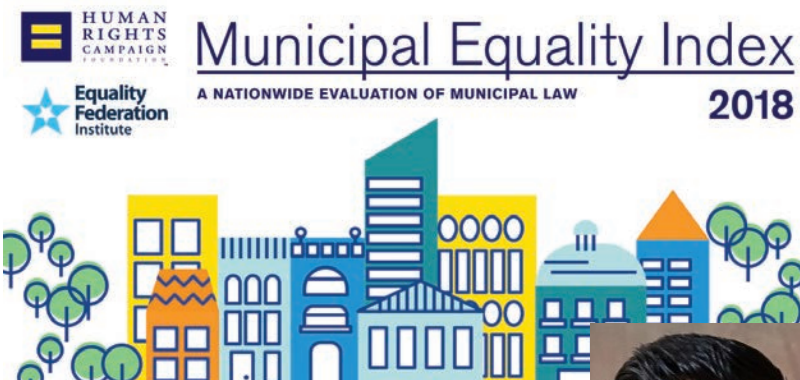
scoring cities had no bonus points.

But though those cities were below average, Persad emphasized that "this is not a measure of the best places to live for LGBTQ people or lived experience," stating that the MEI is a tool that can be used for city officials to understand what work needs to be done and for citizens to understand their protections in certain areas. Persad said that a high score can also serve as an indirect benefit local industry, too.

"From the work that we've done with our sister index, the Corporate Equality Index, we know that businesses value diversity and inclusion and value enforceable protections that include the LGBTQ community," he said. "So, more and more, we're finding that business leaders are using the Municipal Equality Index as a tool as they consider opening sites or expanding or relocating."

But even beyond the potential fiscal benefit, Persad put it plainly: "Enacting LGBTQ-inclusive protections is just simply the right thing to do."

He added that for those places that would like to improve their given scores,



with the smallest population in the Great Lakes region to obtain this accolade."

However, although eight of the chosen 11 cities in Michigan exceeded the national average, there are three that fell below. For instance, Warren scored the worst at only 14 points because it earned only partial minority credit in the category of Non-Discrimination and half credit in the category of Law Enforcement. The second-worst scorer was Sterling Heights at 20 points. It earned partial minority credit in Non-Discrimination, half credit in Law Enforcement and partial majority credit in the Relationship with LGBTQ Community category. The third-worst city was Pleasant Ridge at 55 points. While the city did earn full credit in its Non-Discrimination category, it only earned half credit in Law Enforcement, partial minority credit in the Municipality as Employer category and partial majority credit in its Relationship with the LGBTQ community. Each of the three worst-

HRC aims to be a resource.

"Cities can reach out to us at MEI at HRC.org with specific requests for assistance or more education on the criteria — what an inclusive law policy looks like," Persad said. "So, we will work with cities hand-in-hand to make sure that they're commitment to LGBTQ equality is reflected in their laws and policies."

A full break down of each city's scores is available online at hrc.org/mei.



Xavier Persad

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Detroit Barbershop Helps Patrons Express The Bearded Lady Within

BY DREW HOWARD

One look at The Bearded Lady's waiting room – a bright, cheery space complete with a beer fridge, coffee maker, bookshelf, standing lamp and a backdrop of family photos – and visitors might think they missed the barbershop and stumbled across someone's living room. Ash Hipps is the shop's owner. She said that's exactly how customers are supposed to feel because comfort for all is the shop's priority.

"I just wanted to have a place where everybody felt welcome, where no one felt weird," she said. "Because I've both worked in salons and attended them, I know it could be very uncomfortable for people. I could get that read on people."

"I wanted to make sure I opened a place where people who could afford to get a haircut regularly could get them more frequently," she said. "And for the people who have a problem affording a decent haircut, placing them at a price they could access."

And the shop certainly draws a collection of diverse clientele. Something in which shop employee Vanu Gant takes a lot of pride. Unlike a more traditional salon, Gant said she sees about an equal amount of women as she does men.

"We have all types of these blue-collar dudes, and they could be sitting next to someone who (has) got lime green hair, 10 piercings and a mullet," Gant said. "And we would all get into conversation."

In fact, the opportunity to service a community with a diverse clientele is what drew Hipps to the Detroit area. Before opening The Bearded Lady, she worked to cultivate a strong network of customers through a variety of odd jobs in the area.

Many of these were pop-up events, she said, which involved Hipps setting up her own haircut station at venues like farmers markets, block parties and various Detroit businesses.

"If there was an opportunity to take, I took it, no matter how weird it was," she said.

Hipp's setup was not unlike a rock band traveling with stage equipment from one gig to the next, but instead of guitars and amps she unpacked a minisalon.

"I'd lug around a whole station," she said. "I was loading it and unloading it, not having running water and having to cut hair in terrible lighting and borrowing lamps. It was fun, and I'm glad I did it. ... it helped build my confidence."

"Warm," "laid-back" and "friendly" are the

words she uses to describe the Detroiters who she met while travelling with her haircutting station around the Metro area. Those are also the adjectives she hopes that current customers will use when describing The Bearded Lady today.

Perhaps some of the reason that much of Hipps' focus is on a welcoming salon is because it was her family's business, too. Much of her childhood was spent helping her grandmother and aunt's salon in Flint.

"They always had me in there ripping foils, sweeping, folding towels," she said. "It was a just a part of our family. Someone was always getting their hair done – it was a family activity. ... My aunt would be doing my mom's hair, my hair, my brother's hair and my uncle's hair all at the same time."

Hipps said that bringing a similar familial, laid-back energy to The Bearded Lady goes against the grain of many of the salons outside the Detroit area. And Hipp does include many personal touches in the way she runs her shop. For instance, it's not uncommon to see Hipps' social media posts of her dog Bernie – aka the shop's unofficial canine mascot – hanging out with her at work. Observant customers will also notice a possibly abnormal amount of memorabilia from Hipps' all-time favorite TV show, "The Golden Girls," strewn about the shop.

"I have loved 'Golden Girls' since I was little," Hipps said. "My mom always made fun of me, saying, 'Why do you like that show about old ladies?' I don't know. ... It's always been comforting to me."

"Bea Arthur always reminds of my grandma," she added. "The savviness, the personal style, the hair – everything about her reminds me of Bea Arthur."

Quirky decor aside, Hipps' shop stands out in another way, too: pricing. She said that it's her belief that the cost of a haircut should be measured by length, not gender.

"I wanted to make sure I opened a place where people who could afford to get a haircut regularly could get them more frequently," she said. "And for the people who have a problem affording a decent haircut, placing them at a price they could access."

Accessibility goes beyond just pricing, though. As a member of the LGBTQ



community, Hipps understands firsthand how tricky it can be for someone to request a haircut that falls outside societal gender norms.

"My aunt cut my hair most of my life, but when I lived out of state or just couldn't get home and I needed a haircut, I went to other salons," she said. "I'd end up paying 60, 70 bucks for a haircut with these weird flourishes I didn't ask for. It's not reflective of my style, or how I prefer to look. They weren't paying attention, and just wanted to make sure I looked like a girl."

That's why Hipps is adamant that she'll stick to the styles that customers request.

"If someone comes in and say they want a short haircut, or understands they want a classic fade or something, I'm not going to shy them away because I think it's more feminine to do

something else," she said.

That fearless approach to unconventional style – especially where it concerns gender presentation – is where the shop gets its offbeat name, too.

"It's a play on gender and gender roles," Hipps said. "If you're a little strange, you can come here. There's a little bearded lady in everyone."

The Bearded Lady is located at 1701 Trumbull Ave. in Detroit, Suite A on the corner of Trumbull and Bagley, on the Bagley side. Call 313-338-5122 or email thebeardedladydetroit@gmail.com for more information or to schedule an appointment. Find the shop online thebeardedladydetroit.com. or follow them on Facebook [facebook.com/thebeardedladydetroit](https://www.facebook.com/thebeardedladydetroit) and Twitter @beardedladydet.

Affirmations Hosts 'Transgender and Thriving' Workshop via MCC-D

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Rev. Dr. Justin Tanis is known by many in the LGBTQ community for his book that explores the relationship of the transgender community to religion: "Transgender: Theology, Ministry and Communities of Faith." The 2003 work has helped give Tanis, who is not only transgender himself but also the managing director for the Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies at the Pacific School of Religion, a unique outlook on the topic. On Saturday, Nov. 10, he'll be sharing his insights with Michigan crowds through a workshop at Ferndale's Affirmations LGBTQ community center called Transgender and Thriving. The event is sponsored by the Metropolitan Community Church - Detroit in Clawson.

"It was my doctoral dissertation," Tanis said of his written work. "I wrote the book that I wanted to read while I was transitioning, documenting God's affirmation for transgender people. I wanted to highlight the primarily positive ways in which the Bible talks about gender differences and also begin to articulate what is different about theology done by and for transgender people."

In 2003, Tanis's book was one of very few on the shelves that attempted to tackle the crossroads of transgender persons and religion.

"There was very little written by and for transgender people of faith at the time and I wanted to address that," said Tanis. "I am particularly interested in providing a positive perspective for transgender people and our loved ones."

So Tanis turned his dissertation into a textbook of sorts, teaching about the spiritual needs of the transgender community and the steps a church must take to include them.

Despite the 15 years that have passed since the book was written, Tanis said that the core of his work still stands up. He said he is glad that during that time there has been much improvement in both the understanding and perception of transgender people — though he said there is still much to be done.

"Many, many things have changed since I wrote the book," he said. "To begin with, there is so much more research about transgender lives, so we have more concrete knowledge to back up what we knew anecdotally back then. We have also made considerable strides in greater social acceptance and legal protections, although those are under threat at the moment.

"Our language about transgender people has changed," Tanis continued. "For example, my original editors felt 'transgendered people' was more grammatically correct than 'transgender people.' Now, people consider 'transgendered' to be a negative word. Back then, non-binary wasn't used to the same degree that it is now. People used 'gender variant.'"

In fact, considering the strides made over the past decade and a half, Tanis said he briefly considered re-writing the book.

"I decided not to re-write the book because so many of these things have changed," he said. "I felt it was more important to let history stand as history and focus instead on writing new chapters and books. But I think that, terminology aside, there is much of the theology in this book that is very current and relevant."

Today, with trans rights under attack, Tanis said it is more important than ever that communities of faith stand with the transgender community.

"I believe that communities of faith are called to model God's love and care for people," he said. "That includes standing with the marginalized who are often treated with disrespect, violence and discrimination in society. Young transgender women of color face horrific levels of violence and intolerance, and all members of the transgender community are greatly increased risk. This should not be acceptable to people of faith. We are called to treat others as we want to be treated by them and to treat our neighbors as ourselves."

It's also not lost on Tanis that it's often so-called faith leaders who are perpetuating the violence against trans folks.

"People of faith are among the leaders trying to ensure that we do not have legal protections," he said. "Christians are the ones fighting hate crimes legislation, non-discrimination ordinances, and promoting legal discrimination based on religion. Therefore, Christians and other people of faith need to be prominent in saying that those who promote intolerance do not speak for all of Christianity or all faiths. We have a responsibility to speak out when faith is being used as a weapon against others."

Tanis went on to say that in trying political times, the transgender community and its allies can use the help of organized faith more than ever.


"Together, we'll define spiritual health for ourselves and look at some of the components that contribute to our wellbeing," Tanis said. "Then we'll consider what these mean for us individually and how we might cultivate spiritual health within our communities. We'll ask, 'What can we do to preserve the lives of transgender people and how will that make a difference in our world? Our survival and our thriving are acts of resistance and resilience.'"

Transgender & Thriving with Rev. Dr. Justin Tanis will place Saturday, Nov. 10 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Affirmations in Ferndale. The church is located at 205 N. Main Street in Clawson. Admission to the workshop is \$50 and includes a copy of Tanis's book. For more information, visit mccdetroit.org.



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'Evidence of Things Unseen' Midwest Premiere Opened Detroit Rep's 62nd Season

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT — "Evidence of Things Unseen" is about two sisters, Abigail — an investigative journalist and atheist — and Jane, a stay-at-home mom and born-again Christian. The play follows the duo's differing responses to grief, revenge, sorrow and faith. Written by Katie Forgette, it opened Detroit Repertory Theatre's 62nd season last week, and will run through Dec. 23.

The play is directed by Lynch Travis and the cast includes Rep stage newcomer Nicole Levey-Hunt as Abigail, veteran Rep actors Yolanda Jack, Cornell Markham David Wolber — who returned to the Rep stage 20 years after his first appearance. The production team includes stage manager Kelly Pino; set design is done by Harry Wetzels; costume design by Mary Copenhagen; and light design by Thomas Schraeder.

Forgette spent most of her professional life as an actor and has a long list of acting credits. Her play, "A Facility for Living" had its Midwest premiere on the Detroit Repertory Theatre stage in 2013.

Curtain opens at 8:30 p.m. Guests are can stay after to enjoy a free champagne afterglow with the cast and crew. Tickets start at \$17 to \$20, and can be purchased by calling 313-868-1347 or online at detroitreptheatre.com. "Evidence of Things Unseen" will run Thursdays through Sundays.



No Tiptoeing with 'Well-Intentioned White People'

Matrix Theater Season Opener Explores When Good Intentions Have Unintended Results

BY JENN MCKEE

Regulars at the Matrix Theatre might not be surprised to learn that Rachel Lynett's darkly comic play, "Well-Intentioned White People," initially caught the attention of Matrix Theatre's artistic director, Megan Buckley-Ball, by way of its in-your-face title.

"We found it on the New Play Exchange," said Buckley-Ball, referring to an online service provided by the National New Play Network. "Since Matrix has a specific mission to foster social justice, the Exchange has been a fantastic resource for us to find work by playwrights who are responding to what's happening right now within their communities. ... (Lynett's play's) title was incredibly intriguing to me, and the people who are calling for tickets seem to agree."

"Well-Intentioned White People" focuses on a black lesbian professor, Cass, who one day finds the N-word keyed onto her car. Cass simply wants to get her car fixed and put the ugly incident behind her, but several white, well-intentioned allies — her roommate/ex-girlfriend; a dean; a student activist; and a transgender colleague — push her to talk about it publicly, and instead use the incident as a political rallying cry.

"Rachel Lynett obviously does not shy away from being blunt and keeping it real," said Buckley-Ball. "There is a true victim in this show, and we get to see how people of color, and members of LGBTQ-plus communities, have to normalize the attacks they go through every single day just to get through each day. As far as this show is concerned, there's no room for tiptoeing. These are real things that are happening. ... The characters' emotions are raw and real, and they speak their truth."

Buckley-Ball added that the play is "very new property" as it just had its world premiere in Massachusetts only a few months ago. Because of that, there's been a possibility for collaboration with Lynett directly.

"We've been in contact quite a bit," said Buckley-Ball. "She's done some script updates for us, which has been great, and she's helped talk us through what's going on in specific scenes and specific lines."

Script adjustments involved, in part, making a transmasculine AFAB (assigned-female-at-birth) character into a transfeminine AMAB one, since Matrix's production team had been struggling with casting the role.

"We cast Julia Lynn Marsh, who's a transgender performer, but in the other direction — male-to-female," said Buckley-Ball. "Rachel was fantastic and talked us through the process of our casting difficulties, and optimized the script for this change, so there would be nothing awkward."



Mandy Logsdon as Viv, Jan Cartwright as Dean West, Jessica Lauren Wilson as Cass, Julia Lynn Marsh as Parker, and Isabella Weiss as Mara in Matrix Theatre Company's "Well-Intentioned White People" by Rachel Lynett. Photo: Megan Buckley-Ball

Of course, neither Lynett's play nor Matrix's production team aim to discourage white allies from taking action. Instead, they hope to encourage conversation about the best means of working toward positive change.

"For Dean West and for Viv, Cass' ex-girlfriend, it's a sense of empathy that propels them to do something," said Buckley-Ball. "But what they don't recognize is that what they're doing is making it worse. Yes, they're calling more attention to the issue, but while they're doing that, Cass is receiving heightened racial threats on a daily basis — which she keeps from them. ... We see this all the time. A race crime occurs, and we write on Facebook about how horrible it is, and our activism stops there. ... It doesn't do anything, really, but call more attention to the victim. So the overall message of the show is that allies can help ... but there are probably better ways to help."

And although Buckley-Ball knows that some may find the play's title offensive, she noted, "We do not want people to feel attacked when they enter the building. ... We want people to come with an open mind. ... We always want the curtain call to be the beginning of the audience's experience, so they're talking about the play on the drive home, or doing research on what they saw when they are back in front of their computer. We really hope the show provides food for thought."

"Well-Intentioned White People" will be shown at the Matrix Theatre located 2730 Bagley Ave. in Detroit. Tickets are \$22 adults and \$17 for students, seniors, veterans and active military personnel. Reach out for more information by calling 313-967-0599 or visiting matrixtheatre.org.



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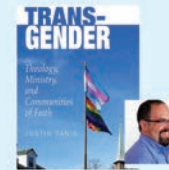
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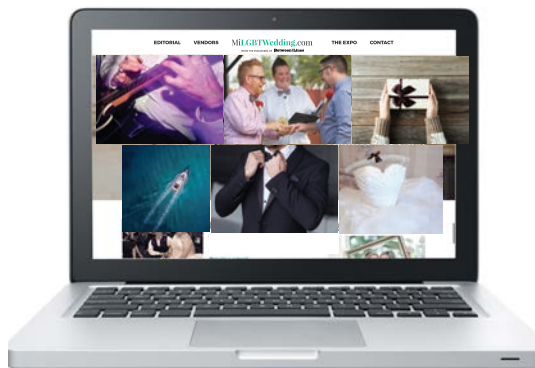
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Brennan Villines ‘Make(s) It Work’ with Brand-New EP

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

After overcoming a battle with drug addiction and an HIV-positive diagnoses, musician Brennan Villines jumped into the national spotlight with a showstopping performance on Fox’s singing competition show “The Four.” Villines imprinted upon viewers not only his musical talent, but the memorable story of his path toward healing. Since his appearance, Villines has been honing his craft even further and has used his national exposure to introduce both new and veteran fans to his unique musical brand. He’s even used the platform to work as an ambassador for Sobercity, a platform dedicated to connecting people who live a sober lifestyle.

Last month, Villines released a brand-new pop-heavy EP called “Make It Work,” and has been amassing hundreds of thousands of

streams across a variety of music platforms. Villines caught up with BTL to chat about his path to success, how life obstacles have informed his work and his next career moves.

You’ve said that music has been a part of your life since you were 3 years old. How did you get involved with it that early?

I wouldn’t necessarily say I was a savant as a kid (laughs), but my mom, she put me into lessons when I was 3 years old because she used to play piano herself. She knew that I would go up to the piano and I would hum the correct pitch at an early age. I started out like any kid; I did it because mom and dad told me to do it and then ended up a couple years later saying, “Oh, I’m better at this than most kids are that just get forced to play piano” (laughs).

Then did you think you were always going to be a musician once you realized that?

I did. ... Since I was a child I literally remember singing in the shower, pretending that I was performing. I don’t know exactly what age, but I can tell you I was really young, and I remember pretending I was at Radio City Music Hall or whatever. So, it’s a blessing that that early on I figured out what I wanted to do with my life or had some sort of goal in mind, which a lot of people take a long time to figure out and sometimes even change careers halfway through their life. But it was also a curse because the career that I chose was entirely difficult (laughs) to get anywhere.

You did end up majoring in music, too, at the University of Memphis, which I’m sure helped develop those skills.

The thing I will say about what I do is, because I chose piano at such an early age, if I were just a singer or songwriter, I would probably be a barista by day or, you know, a bartender or something. But because I have a piano skill and I’m able to lead a band or play weddings and do all the stuff for the many years that I have been in the music industry, it’s allowed me to be able to have a source of income. Even when I’m not performing at a festival, I can perform at a church or a theater show.

College is also where you had a major turning point in life. You’ve said that you met somebody who ended up knocking your life off course at that time.

I met Charles* and he was beautiful. He would be able to tempt anybody into a relationship with him. Not only was he physically attractive, very much so, but he

was also kind of manipulative. We ended up getting to know each other and one night I was introduced to meth, which is what he liked to do recreationally.

It's not entirely his fault that I continued to be a meth user; it was a decision, a choice that I made, but it certainly changed the course of my life for a few years. If not, arguably, the course of my life, period. When I used it the first couple of times I was simply trying to fit in with someone who I thought was massively attractive, and I was awestruck. Fast forward about a year and a half into our relationship I found out that I was HIV-positive. And, of course, me being in a relationship threw up some flags like, "How did this happen?" He knows what he did and it's in the past.

That's a mature outlook on what happened. Did it take some distance from the experience to develop that view?

That's exactly what it took. ... I literally ran away with another guy. I packed up my bags and got a job on a cruise ship and was away at sea for a year being a piano bar entertainer on a cruise ship. I traveled the world and kind of found myself again.

That was an exciting time in my life and I thought things were on the upswing, and then I moved back to Memphis with the intention of moving to New York — this was about six years ago. That didn't happen and I started using again. I broke up with my boyfriend then.

Fast forward a little further, and I got a "real" job. It was the only "real" job I ever had. I worked as an executive assistant at this event planning company. It was not a good fit at all. I learned that I could never work a day job — I'm not cut out for that kind of work (laughs) — and that I needed to be doing something more creative in my life.

Is that when you decided to get back into music?

A good friend of mine and I sat down one night for a chat, (and I) told my parents that I had been fired from my job and that I was going to go back to music. This was about three or four years ago and now I live in New York City.

Do you feel that the fact that you've overcome a tumultuous past has influenced your artistry at all?

Absolutely. I think that everything that went down years ago, it kind of helped me find my voice, honestly. From that point on in those dark times in my life, every time I would sit down at the piano the room would go silent. Kind of like when people stop in their tracks sometimes when they hear something they like. I think, all of a sudden I finally made that switch from performer to artist.

I come from such a privileged life. This was a very real setback. It really honed in on an emotional response that I was able channel through my singing voice and some of the things I wanted to say.

Now that you're in New York, what's the biggest difference you're noticing between working in Memphis?

I just started scraping the surface here. I've been here for five months. I'm fully prepared for it to take up to a year for me to fully even skim the surface. ... Memphis is very special to me because I was able to live there comfortably and make a living doing what I love to do.

If I had moved right after college to New York City, this is just me speaking personally, I would've been probably swallowed alive and not know who I was artistically or mentally and emotionally. I would have probably ended up taking a job in another field.

How has your time on "The Four" impacted your work as an artist?

You know, I've auditioned for those kinds of shows over the years, especially when they came to Memphis. "The Four" ended up being the one that worked out. But artistically I was never really excited about being on one of those (shows) because basically what they wanted to do is have you sing "Superstition" or some popular song that everyone knows, and then you're boxed into that category that everyone saw you on TV as. One key thing that I learned from "The Four" is that because I was able to maintain some of my artistry on the show, I fully realized my artistic integrity.

Speaking of artistic integrity, what felt right to you about moving to New York? Why did that city pull you toward it more than a place like Los Angeles or Atlanta?

You know, part of that was gut feeling. The main answer about New York is that my producer is here; that I have a longtime friendship with him. His name is Benny Reiner and we went to college together in Memphis and formed a couple of bands together.

Leading up till now, we've been working on this record. I'd fly to New York for a few days at a time. I finally made the decision about a year ago to move. New York just felt right for me, because of my personality and with my experience in theater, too.

As an LGBTQ artist, do you find that your identity influences the music that you write?

Of course when I'm writing about something if it has anything to do with a significant other, it's definitely going to be about a boy (laughs). I would say, yeah. I don't necessarily write about LGBT issues, or I haven't yet, but it's definitely a part of my identity in terms of my presentation of who I am. I'm definitely out about it and about my status, and that's very important to de-stigmatize (along with) drug addiction. But those are things that I am more on the front end of rather than sexuality.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*

Find out more information about Villines at brennanvillines.com.



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Ann Arbor Art Center's Holiday Art Shop Opens Nov. 16

Inside the Ann Arbor Art Center is the 117 Gallery Shop that features a range of "original, handmade works of art for sale by emerging and established artists," according to shop owners.

Visiting the shop's website at annarborartcenter.org/117galleryshop/ can give interested patrons a good overview of what available jewelry, encaustic, painting, ceramic and print work is available for purchase, along with a feature of the week piece that highlights some of the best available work. However, more stock is always available in person with "new things coming in weekly." Starting Nov. 16, holiday-themed work will also be a regular feature.

The Ann Arbor Art Center is located at 117 W. Liberty St., and is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and on Sunday from noon to 5 p.m.

Aut Bar Hosts Trivia with Terry Nov. 15

A recurring Thursday event, Terry is Aut Bar's recurring trivia guru who invites patrons to try their hands at answering a slew of varying questions.

"Terry is a Yale graduate and an Aut Bar icon. Come aut and see if you can match his wit and jovial good humor," said event organizers. "Drink tickets to be won."

Aut Bar is located at 315 Braun Court., Ann Arbor. Find out more information on autbar.com or on its Facebook page.

Theatre NOVA Premieres 'The Stone Witch' Through Nov. 11

BY BTL STAFF

ANN ARBOR – Theatre NOVA is a professional theater in Ann Arbor's that focuses exclusively on new plays and playwrights, and since mid-October it's been performing "The Stone Witch" by Shem Bitterman. Available to see through Nov. 11, it focuses on Simon Grindberg, "the world's most illustrious children's book writer."

"Extraordinary art must be tamed," Grindberg says. But, holed up in a remote cabin with his next masterpiece a decade overdue, it's not clear who is the master and who is the servant. When Peter Chandler, a starving artist with literary aspirations of his own, is hired to help "The Great Man" finish his project, an unlikely friendship ensues, haunting secrets emerge and the lines of reality begin to blur. Ultimately, both men must face the terrifying beast dwelling in the dark forest, in a struggle for their artistry, their sanity



and their souls.

The play is directed by Nancy Kammer, and features Dennis Kleinsmith, Ethan Kankula and Diane Hill. The production team includes Forrest Hejkal (scenic design), Jeff Alder (lighting design), Harper Wildern (art projection) Haley Cook (costume design), Carla Milarch (sound design) and Alona Shewach (stage manager).

"The Stone Witch" will run October 19 through November 11, 2018, at Theatre NOVA located at 410 W. Huron, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$22, and Theatre NOVA makes pay-what-you-can tickets available for those who need them. Go online for more information at TheatreNOVA.org or call 734-635-8450.

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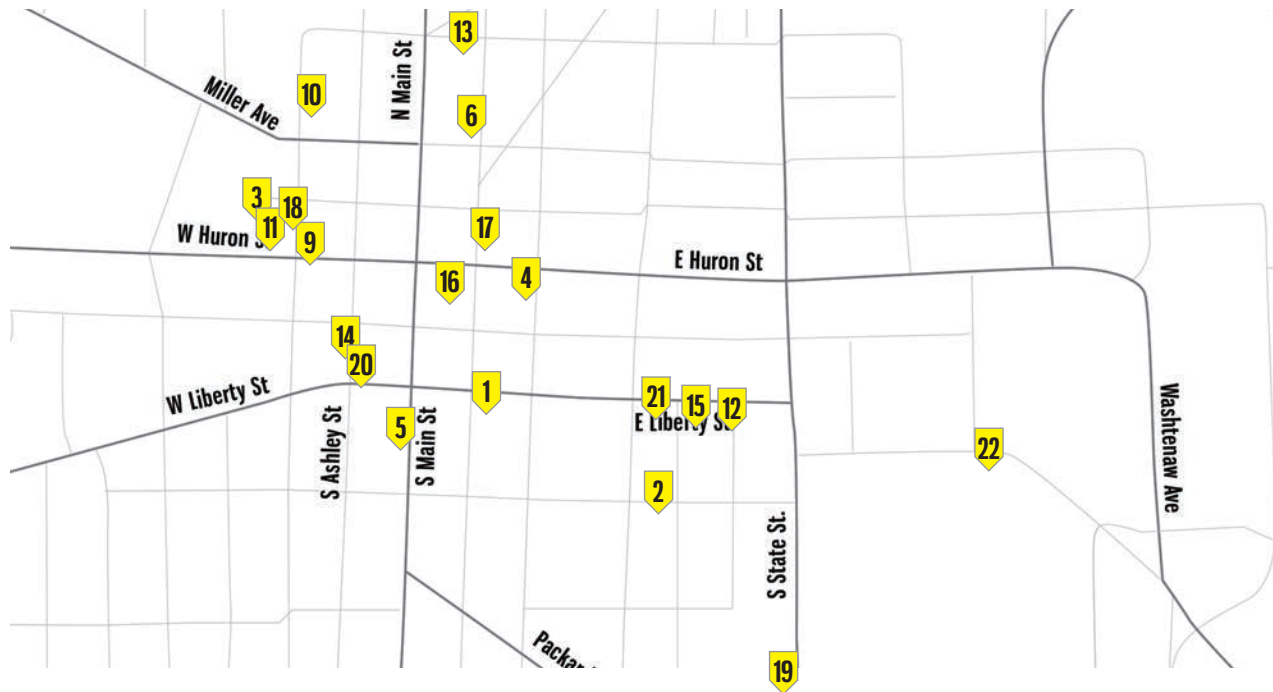
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Happenings

How to Dress Well at El Club Nov. 19

Tom Krell, known better by fans as How to Dress Well, will be stopping by El Club to give Detroit fans a taste of his unique R&B-influenced neo-soul. Krell's music focuses on everything from love, sexuality, pain and joy all in a 21st century pop package. The show will be on Monday, Nov. 19. Doors open at 8 p.m. Tickets start at \$30. More information can be found online at elclubdetroit.com.

OUTINGS

Thursday, November 8

Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce Merge & Mixer 6:30 pm Monthly Networking Event. All are welcomed to network. Check website for monthly location, RSVP is Required. A Soho, 205 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-542-7646. info@detroitlgbtchamber.com. ferndalesoho.com. detroitlgbtchamber.com.

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups - Farmington Hills - Oakland County 7:00 pm FREE group. Oakland United Methodist Church, 30450 Farmington Road, Farmington. 248-626-3620. oaklandumc.org. standwithtrans.org.

Toastmasters International SpeakOUT! LGBTQ Meeting 7:00 pm Professional

& personal communication skills development. Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Court, Ann Arbor. 734-995-9867. lawrencemoebis@gmail.com. speakout.toastmastersclubs.org.

Friday, November 9

Laura Love Concert at the WITA Festival 7:30 pm Co-produced with Lansing's premier folk music organization, the Ten Pound Fiddle. Edgewood United Church, 469 North Hagadorn, East Lansing. 517-484-1712 producer@witafestival.com. witafestival.com.

Saturday, November 10

Transgender and Thriving with Rev. Dr. Justin Tanis 10:00 am Join us for this interactive workshop in which we will explore spiritual health and wellbeing Affirmations, 290 W. Nine

Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org.

Mimi Gonzalez at the Women in the Arts Festival 6:00 pm Mimi Gonzalez has been rocking the mic. at prides & protests to cruises & festivals since long before being gay was spelled with three letters. Edgewood United Church, 469 North Hagadorn, East Lansing. producer@witafestival.com.

Sunday, November 11

MCCDetroit - Spiritual Gifts of the Trans Community 11:30 am MCCDetroit offers as part of their Trans Witness sermon series, Rev. Dr. Justin Tanis will share his journey to spiritual wellness. MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main Street, Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

Monday, November 12

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups - Macomb County 6:30 pm Free. Come and meet other trans youth and teens and support each other through your journeys. Dakota High School, 21051 21 Mile Road, Macomb. 586-723-2700. chippewavalley.schools.org.

Tuesday, November 13

Conversation Station 5:00 pm LGBTQI 25 and over, join GOAL each week for discussion, food and fun. Please RSVP via e-mail or call 248-981-4227 so seating can be reserved. Jimis Restaurant & Banquet Center, 714 S. Washington St., Royal Oak. 248-981-4227.

Wednesday, November 14

Stand with Trans Youth Support Group - Flint - Genesee 6:30 pm Free to all, Trans Youth Support. Facilitator Sara Griffin, MA, LPC is a psychotherapist and a parent of a transgender son, eiregriff@aol.com Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Flint, 2474 S. Ballenger Hwy, Flint. 810-232-4023. uuf Flint.org. standwithtrans.org.

MUSIC & MORE

Hetai Patel: Don't Look at the Finger November 8, 5:00 pm Hetai Patel is a conceptually driven British artist and performer who explores themes of identity and freedom with an attentive eye toward casting the widest net possible through the use of digital technologies and more. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. stamps.umich.edu.

Flint Symphony Orchestra Opening Gala November 8, 6:00 pm Join us in celebrating Enrique Diemecke's 30th year



Editor's Pick

Detroit Women in Digital November Meetup Nov. 14

This month's meeting focuses on marketing for mobile, exploring the types of ads that are best suited for smaller screens. Women in Digital is a professional community that is dedicated to educating its members and empowering them in tech-oriented business. Included in the meeting will be a mix and mingle session, guest speaker Sarah Jazwiecki and a Q&A session. Go online to gaybe.am/SR to buy tickets.

Editor's Pick

Australia's Thunder From Down Under at Sound Board Theater Nov. 14

Since 1991, Australia's Thunder From Down Under has been dazzling audiences around the world, having traveled everywhere from Russia to South Africa. This 21+ show is 90 minutes long and is interactive. Tickets start at \$23. More information can be found online at soundboarddetroit.com.



as conductor of the FSO. Flint Institute of Music, 1025 E. Kearsley St., Flint. 810-238-1350. thefim.org.

Half Truths – A Book Discussion
Facilitated by Michael Hart November 8, 7:00 pm Join us for a rich discussion of Rev. Adam Hamilton's examination of simple phrases that capture some element of Biblical Truth, yet miss the point in important ways. MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main St., Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

Laura Love in Concert November 8, 7:00 pm A former member of Venus Envy. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Flint, 2474 S. Ballenger Hwy, Flint. 810-232-4023. office@uufint.org. uufint.org.

Soundboard Presents Peabo Bryson and Regina Belle! November 8, 8:00 pm Peabo Bryson has been recording music since the late '70s. Over the years, he has released numerous albums including "Reaching for the Sky" and "Can You Stop the Rain." Motor City Casino Sound Board, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313-309-4700.

Jazz & Soul Singer Sky Covington & Club Crescendo Live Every Thursday Night at Northern Lights Lounge November 8, 9:00 pm Northern Lights Lounge, 660 W. Baltimore, Detroit. 248-445-1277. northernlightslounge.com.

Emanuel Ax Plays Beethoven November 9, 10:30 am The Washington Post describes the artistry of Emanuel Ax as "thoughtful, lyrical, lustrous..." Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. dso.org.

Bible 101: A Bible Study Facilitated by Deacon Hattie Alexander-Key November 9, 12:00 pm Come explore the basics of the Bible and take some of the mystery out of what lies between the covers of this book. Held in the Clawson Conference Room. An event every week that begins at 12:00pm on Friday, repeating until November 23 MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main St., Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

Ann Arbor's Storytellers Guild Presents 'Storyfest!' November 9, 7:30 pm Premier storytelling event for adults 14 and older. Features "Moth" winners, door prizes, great snacks and free parking. Not to be missed by adventure-seekers or fun-lovers! Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1400 W. Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor. 734-662-4419. annarborstorytelling.org.

The Ann Arbor Storytellers' Guild Presents StoryFest! November 9, 7:30 pm Storytelling has thrived since prehistoric times because it shares experiences and feelings. StoryFest – 90 minutes of adventure, mystery, romance and comedy – with free parking, free snacks and door prizes! Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1400 W. Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor. 734-662-4419. trinityyaa.org.

Well-Intentioned White People by Rachel Lynett November 9, 8:00 pm

Well-Intentioned White People explores how some people deal with discrimination not necessarily directed at them and how their "good intentions" can sometimes be just as problematic. An event every week that begins at 8:00pm on Friday, repeating until December 2 An event every week that begins at 8:00pm on Saturday, repeating until December 2 An event every week that begins at 3:00pm on Sunday, repeating until December 2 Matrix Theatre Company, 2730 Bagley St., Detroit. 313-967-0599 info@matrixtheatre.org.

Mimi Gonzalez at the Women in the Arts Festival November 10, 6:00 pm Mimi Gonzalez has been rocking the mic at prides & protests to cruises & festivals since long before being gay was spelled with three letters. She welcomes everyone in the acronym of GLBTc through the Edgewood United Church, 469 North Hagadorn, East Lansing. producer@witafestival.com.

Flint Symphony Orchestra Presents The Art of Music November 10, 7:30 pm Immerse yourself in the Drama of Bizet's Carmen Suite No. 1. It was a failure at its premiere, but became enormously successful after Bizet's death. Pre-concert talk at 6:30pm The Whiting Auditorium, 1241 E. Kearsley Street, Flint. 810-237-7333. thewhiting.com.

Storyfest Family Fun Concert November 11, 2:00 pm Storytelling for children ages 4 & up by the Ann Arbor Storyteller's Guild. Stories and fun for all, with a beautiful, homemade quilt to one lucky winner. Pittsfield Branch, Ann Arbor Library, 2359 Oak Valley Drive, Ann Arbor. 734-327-4200. annarborstorytelling.org.

Soundboard presents Thunder from Down Under! November 15, 8:00 pm Australia's Thunder from Down Under is here to rock your world! All guests must be at least 21 years of age with valid ID. Motor City Casino Sound Board, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313-309-4700. motorcitycasino.com.

ART 'N' AROUND

THE STONE WITCH by Shem Bitterman Michigan Premiere November 8, 8:00 pm Peter Chandler, a starving artist with his own literary aspirations, is hired to help "The Great Man" finish his overdue book, an unlikely friendship ensues, secrets are revealed, and the lines of reality begin to blur. Theatre NOVA, 410 W. Huron, Ann Arbor. 734-635-8450. A2TheatreNOVA@gmail.com.

Saline Antiques Market November 11, 9:00 am Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds, 5055 Ann Arbor-Saline Road, Ann Arbor. 734-761-2796. salinemarket@gmail.com. foodgatherers.org.

Unicorn Feed and Supply's First Annual Mermaid Party November 17,

8:00 pm A mermaid themed costume party in downtown Ypsilanti. Join us for an "mazing" evening with Ypsi's own performers Maxi Chanel and Luna Legare, with DJ Jamie Register spinning deep cut soul and funk. Light food, Bona Sera, 200 West Michigan Ave, Yps. info@unicornfeedsupply.com

Parenting in Recovery November 20, 7:30 pm Mary Jo Desprez, MA, and Amber Horwitz, MSW candidate, will discuss the importance of maintaining a strong recovery program while parenting in recovery from substance addiction Explore "parenting skills 2.0" and include a panel discussion. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725

DSO Presents The Vienna Boys Choir! November 25, 7:00 pm The illustrious group of child musicians has been delighting music lovers across the globe for six centuries with their purity of tone, distinctive charm and popular repertoire. Christmas in Vienna showcases these gifted musicians with Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. 313-576-5111 www.dso.org

An Introduction To Cultivating Mindfulness to Support Recovery November 27, 7:30 pm Mindfulness educator and researcher Dr. Elizabeth A.R. Robinson, MPH, MSW, Ph.D will define mindfulness, research supporting mindfulness' benefit, and how mindfulness supports recovery from substance addiction. Free, open to all. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725 www.dawnfarm.org/programs/education-series

Bugs Bunny at the Symphony II November 30, 10:45 am WARNER BROS. PRESENTS: Bugs Bunny at the Symphony II celebrates the world's most beloved Looney Tunes and their legendary stars projected on the big screen with original scores played LIVE by the DSO. It has One event on December 1 at 8:00pm One event on December 2 at 3:00pm Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. 313-576-5111 www.dso.org

War of the Worlds: The Panic Broadcast by Joe Landry November 30, 7:30 pm The play celebrates the 80th anniversary of Orson Welles' 1938 radio adaptation that threw humanity into chaos when aliens made landfall on earth. An event every week that begins at 7:30pm on Friday and Saturday, repeating until December 8 An event every week that begins at 3:00pm on Sunday, repeating until December 9 One event on December 6 at 7:30pm The Marlene Boll Theatre, 1401 Broadway, Detroit. tasiopeg@udmercy.edu <http://detroitmercyarts.com>

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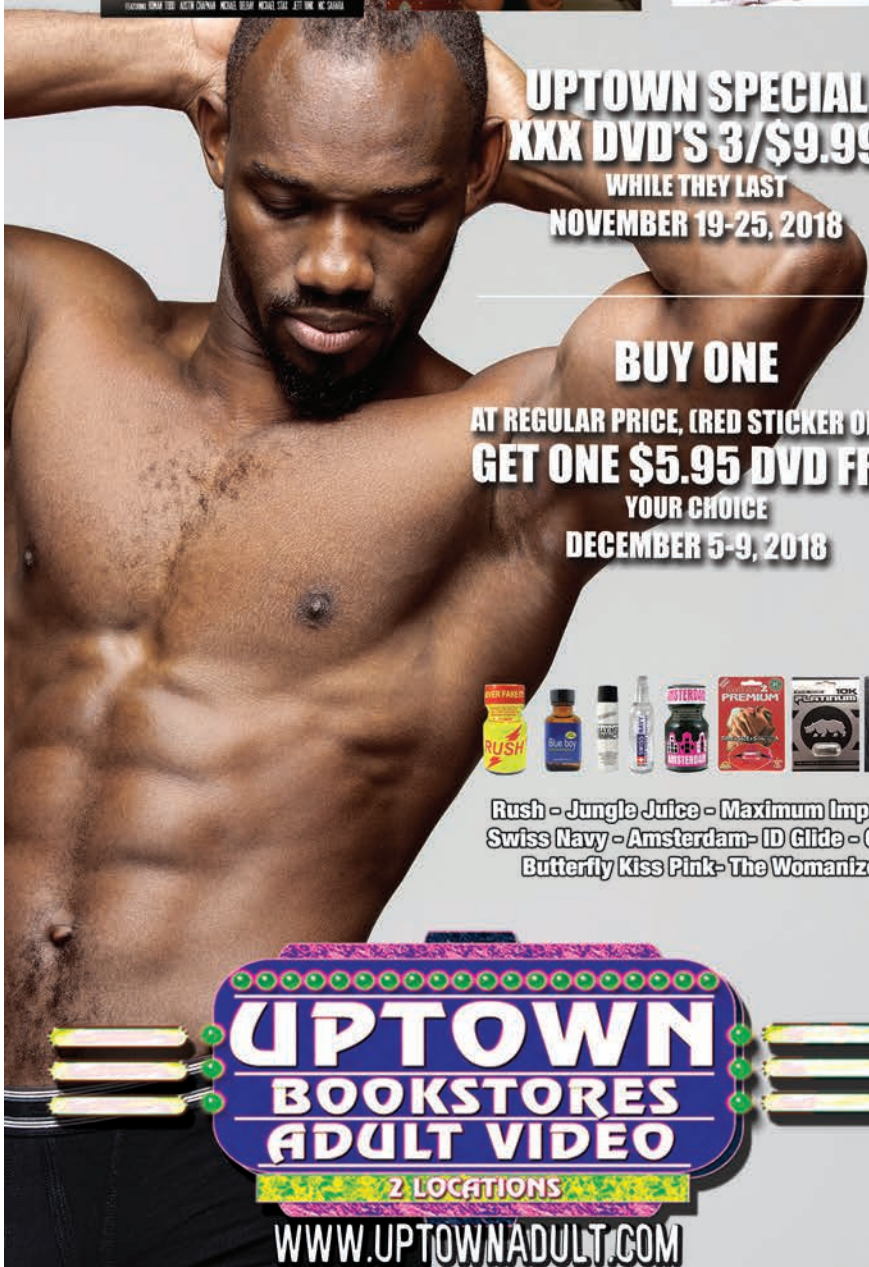
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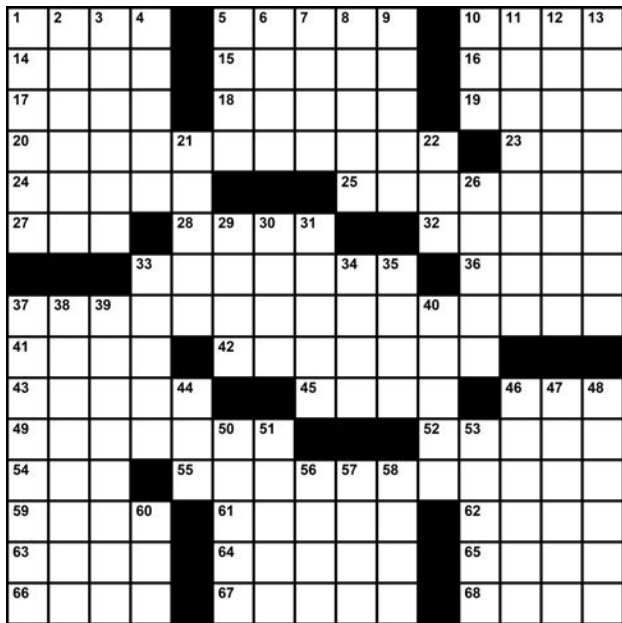
PAUL BENSON, D.O. is a Board Certified Family Medicine physician and Medical Director of the Be Well Medical Center.

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Forever

Across

- 1 Ball lover Arnaz
 5 Socrates' market
 10 Type of Mary pass
 14 Sondheim's "___ the Woods"
 15 Pinkish yellow
 16 "Tales of the City"'s Madrigal
 17 Vocal improv
 18 "My Fair Lady" composer

QPuzzle

- 19 Word for "injure" that sounds like an aunt's name
 20 She plays June in the Amazon series "Forever"
 23 Sodom suffix
 24 They come in buggies
 25 Confines
 27 Hosp. staffer
 28 Ted Casablanca bit
 32 Tried to tackle tight ends, e.g.

- 33 All fouled up
 36 Toy on a string
 37 She plays Kase, who runs off with June in "Forever"
 41 ___-Day vitamins
 42 Queer-looking swimmers
 43 Possible format for Robert Giard
 45 News agency of Nureyev's nation
 46 Roof animal of Tennessee
 49 Battlefield formation
 52 Climb up on the soapbox
 54 Initial sound, in "The Sound of Music"
 55 He plays June's husband Oscar in "Forever"
 59 Icon inscription
 61 "Funny Girl"'s Fanny
 62 MD's P.D.Q.
 63 Fruity drinks
 64 Ex of one we hope will soon be an ex-president
 65 Further
 66 It means nothing to Frida
 67 MTM center
 68 Rank Billie Jean, e.g.

Down

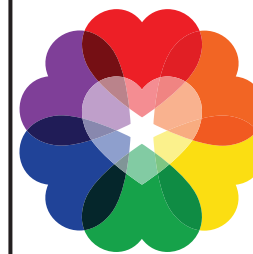
- 1 Bottom-of-the-barrel
 2 Set up a base
 3 The Bee Gees' "___ Alive"
 4 The I's of Sappho
 5 Rights-protecting org.
 6 Van Sant's "___ Will Hunting"

- 7 Milk go-with
 8 R&B singer Lou
 9 Alpha, to the circumcized
 10 Broadway scenery chewer
 11 Lover of June Mansfield
 12 New member
 13 Dirge source
 21 German white wine
 22 Heston's "Ben ___"
 26 Sulu portrayal George
 29 Canvas covering
 30 Disney's "___ and the Detectives"
 31 "Down Under" band ___ Work
 33 Cole Porter's "___ Men"
 34 Finnish gay rights org.
 35 "The ___ the limit!"
 37 Eddie Izzard, e.g.
 38 Boa that's dangerous to wear?
 39 Restrained with a rope
 40 Race site in Britten's land
 44 Fairy tale creature
 46 Dancer Irene
 47 Private's position
 48 Like the big top
 50 Circle of Uranus
 51 Having cojones
 53 Responds to yeast
 56 Prepare for phone sex
 57 Trouble spots for teens
 58 Word before admiral, in the navy
 60 Rose-rose connector, for Stein

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Wednesday, November 21
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21 Years Advocating and Out

Transgender Michigan Founder Celebrates two Milestone Birthdays

BY DREW HOWARD

Rachel Crandall-Crocker has two birthdays: the day she was born and the day she began living her truth. Friday, Nov. 2, commemorates her second. That was the day she committed to living fully as Rachel. Dozens of friends and community members attended a costume party in her honor at Affirmations, which doubled as the 21st anniversary party for Crandall-Crocker's organization, Transgender Michigan.

Founded in 1997 with the help of her wife Susan Crocker, the organization works to advocate on behalf of the transgender community through events, online resources and a first-of-its-kind helpline that's reachable at 855-345-TGMI (8464).

Looking over her two decades-long advocacy, Crandall-Crocker said that nothing like Transgender Michigan existed when the organization was formed.

"There was a lot of loneliness. And there were people who were taking their own lives. It was really awful," she said. "We wanted to create a way that people could all come together so we won't have to be so lonely anymore."

Its 17 regional chapters alone can attest to the organization's fight against loneliness in Michigan's transgender community, along with seven special interest chapters. Susan Crocker cited Transgender Michigan's events calendar as another measure of the organization's growth.

"For our first project we put out a calendar of all the events across the state for three months - it was half a page," she said. "Now it's too big to publish."

Beyond that advocacy, Crandall-Crocker is also the founder of the International Transgender Day of Visibility.

"In March it's the 10th anniversary," Crandall-Crocker said. "I created it one late night on Facebook, and now it's an international trans holiday!"

To learn more about Transgender Michigan, as well as ways to support Michigan's transgender community, visit transgendermichigan.org.

Follow Election 2018 Results: What the Vote Means for the LGBT Community

Online @ Pridesource.com

HRC Sends FOIA to HHS for Records of Trump Administration's Attempt to Redefine 'Gender'

BY BTL STAFF

WASHINGTON — Last week LGBTQ activism organization the Human Rights Campaign, sent a Freedom of Information Act request to the Department of Health and Human Services. In its request, HRC asked for all records related to the Trump administration's efforts to redefine the word "gender" in order to exclude transgender people from federal civil rights protections and enable discrimination against LGBTQ people in general.

On Oct. 21, the New York Times published a report that "the Trump administration is considering narrowly defining gender as a biological, immutable condition determined by genitalia at birth." According to the report, HHS drafted a memo to establish the legal definition of "sex," and the

"agency's proposed definition would define sex as either male or female, unchangeable, and determined by the genitals that a person is born with [...]. Any dispute about one's sex would have to be clarified using genetic testing."

"This effort by the Trump-Pence Administration to erase transgender people in the public square and exclude them from federal civil rights protections is horrific and alarming," said HRC Legal Director Sarah Warbelow. "It is imperative we understand the key players pushing for this destructive action along with their motivations, analysis and rationale."

HHS will likely also encourage other federal agencies to follow suit in their severely restrictive and narrow definition of sex. The administration's decision could have severe consequences for LGBTQ

people across the federal government.

- A transgender person could have their insurance deny them coverage for transition related care.

- Same-sex couples and their families could be turned away from emergency shelters.

- A transgender woman could be turned away from a hospital for a broken ankle.

- A gay man could be harassed about being gay at a job skills training.

- An elderly transgender person or same-sex couple could be denied in home meal service.

- A transgender girl could be forced to live in a youth shelter for boys.

Discrimination is a real and persistent problem for far too many LGBTQ Americans. HRC polling has found that nearly two-thirds of self-identified LGBTQ Americans report experiencing discrimination.

Measuring Outcomes for Boys and Men of Color

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT - Five Southeast Michigan organizations that serve boys and men of color received support to evaluate their impact thanks to funding made available through the Community Foundation and the national capacity-building program called Research, Integration, Strategy and Evaluation.

RISE is a program to better understand and strategically improve the lives, experiences and outcomes of boys and men of color. It is co-led by the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education and Equal Measure, a national evaluation and philanthropic services firm.

The purpose of this program is to enable local organizations to build capacity to collect and analyze data in a way that furthers organizational missions and contributes to boys and men of color research, evaluation, and program replication and adaptation.

Each of five Detroit-area organizations were awarded \$15,000 to better measure and evaluate their program's impact on the lives, experiences and outcomes of boys and men of color. The organizations will partner with the University of Michigan School of Social Work Program Evaluation Group to



The Lyricists Society is one of five groups supported via RISE and the Community Foundation

complete their projects. Organizations are using the funding in the following ways:

- Green Door Initiative is evaluating strategies and models to recruit and retain African-American young adult males in workforce development programs.

- Focus:HOPE is evaluating the Men in Motion Fatherhood Initiative in the early learning

- program, which strives to help African American fathers of Head Start children establish

- consistent and positive relationships with their families.

- The Lyricist Society, in partnership with The Yunion, is evaluating the success and impact

- of its after-school creative arts program at Frederick Douglas Academy, the state's only all-male public high school.

- LGBT Detroit is incorporating evaluation strategies into its new Brother 2 Brother

- program, which is aimed at providing HIV prevention education and support to young gay and bisexual men of color.

- Sigma Pi Phi Iota Boulè Educational Foundation is evaluating Pathway to Excellence, a

- youth leadership development program for high performing African American boys.

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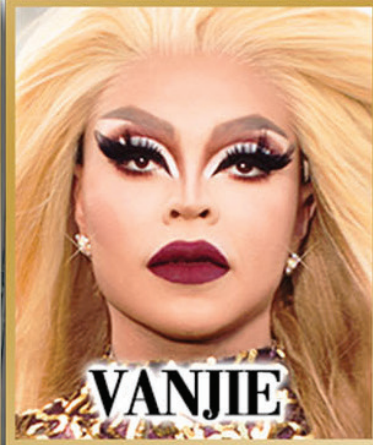
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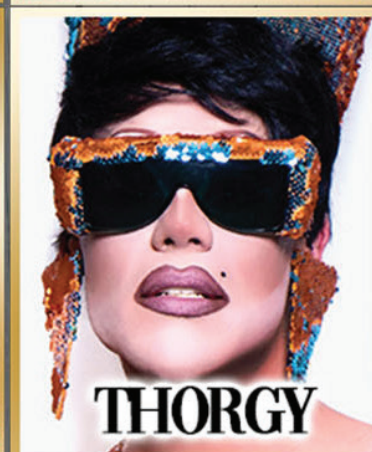
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